

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Friday, May 16, 2008
Prescott Quality Inn & Suites
4499 Highway 69
Prescott, AZ 86301

PRESENT: (Commission)

(Director's Staff)

Chairman William H. McLean
Vice Chairman Robert D. Hernbrode
Commissioner Jennifer L. Martin
Commissioner Robert R. Woodhouse
Commissioner Michael M. Golightly

Director Larry D. Voyles
Deputy Director Steve K. Ferrell
Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk
Assistant Attorney General Shelley Cutts

Chairman McLean called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. This meeting followed an agenda revision dated May 12, 2008.

* * * * *

1. Executive Session

The Commission voted to meet in Executive Session in accordance with A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A)(3) and (4) for the purpose of discussion and consultation with legal counsel.

Motion: Woodhouse moved and Martin seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

The Public Meeting reconvened at 8:23 a.m.

* * * * *

Chairman McLean called the meeting back to order and lead those present through the Pledge of Allegiance. The Commission introduced themselves and Chairman McLean introduced the Director and the Director's staff.

* * * * *

2. Litigation Report

There were no comments or questions on this item.

* * * * *

3. State and Federal Legislation

Presenter: Anthony Guiles, Legislative Liaison

Mr. Guiles reported to the Commission on the current status of selected state and federal legislation and current elective issues. The Commission was provided with a brief Power Point presentation and informational materials on proposed legislation (also available to the public). Mr. Guiles further briefed the Commission on the following:

Bills Supported by the Commission

- HB2068: *game and fish; private enterprise; fund*: Alternate language was presented to the Senate Appropriations Chair, who had some issues with this bill. Feedback from the Chair on the alternate language included that a private enterprise vendor be allowed to do the retail sales and that a 3rd party mediate the contract of that lease.

The Department recommended that the Commission take no further action on this legislation. At this point it will probably not go up for a vote. In discussions with the Attorney General's Office it was determined that Statute allows for the Commission to authorize the Department to sell certain items in order to operate a shooting range. Those items include ammunition, targets, and hearing and eye protection. The Department will continue to inform and educate Legislators on its activities and purposes regarding shooting ranges.

The Commission was in consensus.

Bills Supported by the Commission (continued)

- HB2251: *game and fish omnibus*-Chap. 37, Laws 2008: Act to take effect January 1, 2009; The Department will designate an implementation team to ensure proper measures are taken for a smooth statutory and rule transition.
- HB2395: DUI; OUI: Vetoed by the Governor on 4/29/08; there may be another striker amendment to move this forward this session.

The Department has concerns with HB2395 in that the provision regarding the refusal penalty associated with the bill was not included, which may cause difficulty for law enforcement in the field. However, they were amiable to working with the Department to try to find a solution.

Chairman McLean commented that the Commission's issues were not the issues that caused the veto and in his discussions with the Governor's Office and Senator Gray, he believes that the legislation could be put back together very well.

Mr. Guiles reported that Senator Gray will try to get this before the Committee of the Whole on Monday and then try to get it back up to the Governor's Office.

Bills Supported by the Commission (continued)

- SB1167: *off-highway vehicles; user fee*: Was heard in Senate Majority Caucus and held; Stakeholders group are trying to have it placed on the calendar.

Bills Opposed by the Commission

- SB 1264: rights-of-way; public lands: Held in House Rules a month ago and was re-heard this past week with a do pass recommendation.

Upcoming Legislative Issues

- Transportation Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy (T.I.M.E.) Initiative has been filed with Secretary of State's office; they have until July 3, 2008 to collect the required number of signatures to get this on the ballot.

Mr. Guiles stated that the Department will present a full briefing on this item at the June Commission meeting along with a full briefing on the State Trust Land Reform Initiative.

Chairman McLean stated that by August it will be known if either one of these items make it on the ballot and requested that at that time the proponents and opponents be invited to make a presentation to the Commission prior to the Commission taking action to support or oppose.

Upcoming Legislative Issues (continued)

- FY-09 Ongoing Budget Negotiations: there is a 2 billion dollar deficit for FY-09 and a 15 member panel is working on it; they are still 600,000,000 away from having this resolved; they are expected to still be working on it by the June Commission meeting.

Congressional Bills

- HR3287: Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act

Chairman McLean discussed an article published in the Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation newsletter and asked the Commission if they would like a response written to addresses the issues and provide the entire picture to sportsmen regarding the Tumacacori.

Commissioner Woodhouse did want to see the Commission start writing rebuttals to sportsmen newsletter articles. These types of issues are regularly discussed at Commission meetings where the Commission expresses their opinions and reasons for actions taken, and where members of the public and sportsmen's groups can address the Commission on any agenda item of concern.

Commissioner Hernbrode suggested developing a working group or committee to address issues with wildlife management in Wilderness.

Commissioner Martin suggested posting an informational briefing on the Department's website on the Commission's position, but not in the form of a rebuttal.

Commissioner Golightly stated that on big issues such as this one, the Commission could be more proactive on getting their position out to the public; however, he did not see a rebuttal as necessary.

The Commission was in consensus to not write a response to the article but to be more proactive in the future on sensitive items, and to make Commissioner Hernbrode's suggestion a future agenda item.

Congressional Bills (continued)

- HR2419: Farm Bill: The House of Representatives passed the conference report on the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 by a vote of 318-106. Provisions include: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)-Arizona has no acreage enrolled; Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)- Renewed with \$1.3 billion; Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)-renewed with \$300 million; Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)-working lands conservation program received an increase of at least \$3.4 billion; Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)-\$562 million; Chesapeake Bay Program-brand new program \$372 million; Open Fields-new access program to help states enroll private land for sportsmen use-\$50 million.

* * * * *

4. Information and Education Activities Briefing

Presenter: Ty Gray, Assistant Director, Information and Education Division

The Commission was provided with an Information and Education Program Report prior to this meeting (also provided to the public), which presented new information as well as progress toward ongoing issues and concerns related to Information and Education programs. The update covered activities and events that occurred since the April 2008 Commission meeting and was provided in fulfillment of the Department's commitment to brief the Commission on a regular basis regarding the Department's Information and Education programs.

There were no additional updates on this item.

* * * * *

5. Statewide Shooting Range Briefing

Presenter: Jay Cook, Education Branch Chief

The Commission was provided with a Statewide Shooting Range Update prior to this meeting of Department activities related to shooting range support and development statewide. The update, also available to the public, covered activities that occurred since the April 2008 Commission meeting. The statewide shooting range briefing is part of the Department's ongoing commitment to provide the Commission with updates on statewide shooting range development and shooting sports in general.

Mr. Cook recapped several items in the Update using a Power Point presentation and provided some additional information.

Chairman McLean commented on the offer of assistance by the Navy Seabees on the Ben Avery Shooting Facility (BASF) DPS 300-Yard Rifle Range project, and asked if military units might be willing to assist at some other ranges around the State that are in development stages.

Mr. Cook will get with the Ben Avery Range Manager who has been coordinating with the military units and check into that possibility.

The Commission discussed Phase II of the BASF RV Campground and directed the Department to use that space as dry camping until funding is available for RV hook-ups.

The Commission discussed the Northern Arizona Shooting Range and that the Governor's Office has not yet received a response from a letter sent by the Governor to the Coconino National Forest (CNF) asking that the Feasibility Analysis be expedited.

Chairman McLean will discuss this matter with the Governor's Office and suggest that they send a follow up letter to CNF.

Chairman McLean, in regards to the proposed White Mountain Shooting Range, suggested that the Department discuss with the Arizona Department of Transportation the option of requesting a change in the current Special Use Permit (SUP) from "Mining Cinders" to "Storage of Cinders" which would allow for half of the property to be released for another entity to acquire the SUP. Being able to use half the property would be better than no shooting range at all and it would at least get the process moving.

Commissioner Golightly noted for the record that the Commission is continuing to work on issues with the National Rifle Association. There was not enough information at this time for discussion.

* * * * *

6. Ben Avery Shooting Facility Fee Schedule

Presenter: Jay Cook, Education Branch Chief

The Department proposed a new fee schedule for the Ben Avery Shooting Facility to the Commission at its March 2008 meeting and received 116 public comments on the proposal. The last fee adjustment for the facility took effect July 1, 2001. These fees were to be in effect for an estimated period of three years. The new proposed fee increases are in response to increased costs for materials, targets, utilities, employee salary adjustments, increased staffing to provide additional customer service and support for Master Plan developments. The proposed fees were developed from staff recommendations, benchmarking with other public ranges and public/user group comments. Upon Commission approval, the new fee schedule would become effective on July 1, 2008 unless otherwise noted.

The Department spent considerable time working on a recommended annual range pass fee but it was determined to not be feasible due to the projected revenue losses associated with implementing an annual fee. The Department will continue to work on developing a process and system that will allow users to purchase multiple visits at discounted rates similar to the Clay

Target Center Pay and Play card system. Once a system is developed and in place the Department will present a fee structure for Commission approval.

The following table presents the complete proposed fee schedule. In addition to the fees below, the Department requested Commission approval to develop and provide range coupons and free passes to be used in conjunction with outreach efforts to promote use of the range at the discretion of the Director.

DAILY FEE SCHEDULE - LINE ITEMS:	CURRENT FEE:	PROPOSED FEE:
<i>Daily Shooter Fees:</i>		
Public Range Fee (main, specialty, archery)	\$5.00	\$7.00
Public Range Fee (<17 years of age)	No Charge	No Charge
Specialty/Archery Range Fee (competitions and registered practices)	\$5.00	\$6.00
Range Training/Education Fee (LE, Military, Security)	\$5.00	\$7.00
Range Training/Education Fee (Commercial)	\$10.00	\$15.00
10 Day Shooting Pass (11 visits)	-	\$70.00
<i>Daily Building/Facility Fees:</i>		
Daily Classroom Fee (Including Con Ed)	\$40.00	\$50.00
Activity Center Half Day Reservation (< 4 hours)	\$65.00	\$75.00
Activity Center Full Day Reservation (> 4 hours)	\$150.00	\$150.00
<i>Camping Fees:</i>		
Daily Campsite Fee w/Utilities (Water & Electric)	\$25.00	\$25.00
Weekly Campsite Fee w/Utilities	-	\$100.00
Monthly Campsite Fee w/Utilities (plus annual pass or class 5 Card)	-	\$300.00
Daily Campsite Fee w/o Utilities	\$10.00	\$12.00
Daily Primitive Camp Fee	\$5.00	\$7.00
<i>Miscellaneous Fees:</i>		
Large Event (>250) or main range Vendor Fee (daily)	\$20.00	\$20.00
Small Event (<250) Vendor Fee (per event)	-	\$20.00
Daily Night Lighting Fee	\$10.00	\$15.00
Failure to Cancel Fee - Half Day Reservation - per/incident	\$30.00	\$45.00
Failure to Cancel Fee - Full Day Reservation - per/incident	\$60.00	\$75.00
Range Clean-Up Fee (per hour of clean-up required)	\$15.00	\$30.00
Annual Storage Fee (Effective January 1, 2009)	-	\$.30/sq ft

	CURRENT FEE:	PROPOSED FEE:
CLAY TARGET CENTER		
Trap and Skeet (round of 25)	\$5.00	\$6.00
Sporting Clays (round of 25)	\$8.00	\$10.00
Sporting Clays (round of 50)	\$15.00	\$20.00
Sporting Clays (round of 100)	\$25.00	\$30.00
5 Stand and Wobble trap (round of 25)	-	\$6.50
Class 5 Pay and Play Cards (20 rounds loaded - price per round)	\$4.50	\$5.50
<i>Corporate Fees (Trap, Skeet and Sporting Clays)</i>		
25 Targets	\$25.00	\$25.00
50 Targets	\$50.00	\$50.00
75 Targets	\$75.00	\$75.00
100 Targets	\$100.00	\$100.00
<i>Premium Corporate Fees (Monday and Tuesday)</i>		
50 Targets	\$60.00	\$60.00
75 Targets	\$90.00	\$90.00
100 Targets	\$120.00	\$120.00
Registered/Non-Registered Shoots (Base)		
Sporting Clays (round of 100)		\$35.00
Trap (round of 100)		\$22.00
Skeet (round of 100)		\$22.00
Shoot Services (additions to base per shooter/100 targets)		
Puller/Scorer		Trap/SC \$4.00 Skeet \$5.00
Administration		\$3.00
Association Fees (National + State)		Trap/Skeet \$4.00 Sport Clay \$6.00
Trophies		\$2.00 - \$5.00
	CURRENT FEE:	PROPOSED FEE:
<i>Miscellaneous CTC Fees</i>		
Golf Cart Hitching (Annual Fee)	-	\$30.00
Golf Cart Rental (currently not available)		4 hours \$10.00 All Day \$15.00
Push Cart Rental	\$5.00	\$5.00

Pay and Play Card	\$10.00	\$15.00
Firearm Rental Daily Fee (new Berettas/Benelli only)	-	\$10.00
Field/Station Daily Reservation Fee (pending availability)	-	\$100.00

Motion: Martin moved and Hernbrode seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED BEN AVERY SHOOTING FACILITY FEE SCHEDULE.

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

7. Scholastic Clay Target Program Update

Presenter: Anthony Chavez, Shooting Range Administrator

Mr. Chavez provided the Commission with an update of Department activities related to the Scholastic Clay Target Program. The update included a Power Point presentation that covered the program's history, current structure and status, participation and the results of a participant survey, as well as funding mechanisms. The mission of the Arizona SCTP is to introduce Arizona youth to shooting sports (trap, skeet, sporting clays) and youth development (use shooting sports to instill discipline, safety, teamwork, ethics, self-confidence and other life values), and to bridge the gap between hunting and non-hunting shooting families.

Commissioner Golightly asked if participants can purchase ammunition in bulk along with the Department's purchase.

The Department responded that it could check into this possibility which would be dependent on the vendor's willingness to do this. However, the Department's current vendor price is \$5.10 per box of ammunition and the Department provides it to the public for \$6.00 a box to cover transport, storage, inventory and handling. Therefore, this would not result in any significant cost savings for the participants.

Public Comment

Hays Gilstrap, Arizona Shooting Sports Education Foundation (and former Game and Fish Commissioner), addressed the Commission in support of the SCTP program.

Russ Gunderson, Arizona Shooting Sports Education Foundation (AzSSEF) Director and President, briefed the Commission on his organization.

Bruce Kinkner, AzSSEF Treasurer, addressed the Commission requesting that the Commission allow the AzSSEF to assist the Department in establishing a program of individual and corporate sponsorships for shooting and archery facilities throughout Arizona.

The Commission discussed with the AzSSEF representatives the SCTP funding and other related issues and clarified that this would be similar to the program initiated by the Mounted Shooters Association.

The Commission was in consensus to support the program and directed the Department to work with AzSSEF to develop the same type of program as the Mounted Shooters, and to look at this for inclusion in the June budget package.

Mr. Gunderson further suggested getting more qualified instructors that may offer private instruction which would result in a better and safer shooter.

Commissioner Golightly requested that the Department look into Mr. Gunderson's suggestion.

* * * * *

8. Call to the Public

There were no requests to speak at this time.

* * * * *

Meeting recessed for a break at 10:27 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 11:13 a.m.

* * * * *

9. An Update on Current Issues, Planning Efforts, and Proposed Projects on All Lands in Arizona and Other Matters Related Thereto

Presenter: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

A copy of the Lands Update report was provided to the Commission prior to this meeting and is included as part of these minutes. The update addressed decisions or activities since the April 2008 Commission meeting. This update is in fulfillment of the Department's commitment to brief the Commission on a regular basis regarding decisions and actions on all State and Federal lands in Arizona.

Mr. Avey addressed the Commission. There were no additional updates to report and the Commission had no comments or questions.

* * * * *

10. A Presentation on the Department's Efforts to Identify Crucial Wildlife Habitats and Corridors.

Presenter: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

Mr. Avey briefed the Commission using a Power Point presentation on the Department's efforts to identify crucial wildlife habitats and corridors through the Areas of Conservation Priority (ACP) and how this information is and will be used to guide Department input into projects such

as Wildlife Linkages, the Western Governors' Association Wildlife Corridors Initiative, the Governor's Smart Growth Cabinet, transportation planning, and various strategic approaches to conserving wildlife habitat in Arizona.

This briefing was in fulfillment of the Commission's request for an update. The presentation included the following: Maps and graphs identifying wildlife movement corridors that connect key habitats that sustain wildlife; process outlines used to define and map the locations of important wildlife linkage zones; criterion used to prioritize these areas for further analysis; current development of related Department research projects; ongoing efforts in collaboration with other agencies and developers; and the statewide vision and implementation for conserving and restoring crucial wildlife habitats and corridors across the state, which are vital for maintaining healthy wildlife populations for current and future generations.

Commissioner Hernbrode requested a copy of the Power Point presentation, which Mr. Avey will provide.

Commissioner Martin expressed appreciation to Mr. Avey and the Department. She has heard a lot of praise for the Department's leadership in these efforts from the Governor's staff and from a wide variety of non-government organizations.

* * * * *

11. Request for Commission Approval to Accept the Transfer of Water Assignments from The Hopi Tribe (Hopi Tribe) located at the Cibola Valley Conservation Area in La Paz County, Arizona.

Presenter: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (MSCP) administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (BR), is a comprehensive 50-year species conservation and habitat management program that seeks to conserve habitat, work toward the recovery of threatened and endangered species, and reduce the likelihood of additional species being listed under the Endangered Species Act. The MSCP is designed to mitigate for present water diversions and power production and optimize opportunities for future water and power development.

With support from BR, the Department has negotiated the details of a transfer of water assignments by which the Hopi Tribe would transfer to the Commission 1,500 acre-feet (a/f) 4th priority Colorado River water located at the Cibola Valley Conservation Area in La Paz County, Arizona. These water rights will be purchased with funds provided through MSCP from BR at a cost of approximately \$1400 per acre-feet.

Chairman McLean stated that he hasn't seen the document so is hesitant to give direction to move forward.

Ms. Cutts stated that as with other real estate type transactions, the Commission would approve the project and authorize the Department to enter into the necessary agreements to implement that with the approval of the Attorney General's Office.

Motion: Woodhouse moved and Martin seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF WATER ASSIGNMENTS LOCATED AT THE CIBOLA VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA FROM THE HOPI TRIBE TO THE COMMISSION AND TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING WATER DELIVERY CONTRACTS AND LEASE AGREEMENTS WITH THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO ACQUIRE THIS WATER AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

11B. Kofa Bighorn Sheep Recovery and Lion Management/Research

Presenter: Pat Barber, Yuma Regional Supervisor

In June of 2004 the Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) jointly endorsed an investigative report that identified a number of factors affecting bighorn sheep declines on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Based upon this report, the Department developed a variety of action plans to address the identified issues, including a mountain lion predation management plan. As part of the predation management plan two mountain lions that were trapped on the refuge were lethally removed. After the USFWS was challenged for allowing these activities to occur prior to completing an environmental assessment (EA), the Department agreed to a one year moratorium on lethal removal of lions captured on the refuge. On April 23, 2008, the USFWS released a scoping letter to gather input prior to completing the EA, and are requesting input.

Mr. Barber provided an update on Kofa National Wildlife Refuge Desert Bighorn Sheep Herd Restoration efforts using a Power Point presentation that included the following information:

Kofa Bighorn Sheep Restoration Efforts

Ensure year-round water availability for all bighorn sheep on the Kofa NWR.

- Created water monitoring protocol for the refuge - conduct over flights as needed
- Yaqui and McPherson Tank renovations (resulted in lawsuit)
- Temporary water tank in Engesser Pass (not in wilderness), a second temporary water planned in the Livingston Hills
- Water hauling – some tanks in wilderness require use of thousands of feet of hose
- Installation of evaporative covers on many of the critical sheep waters.

Monitor disease occurrence within the Kofa NWR bighorn sheep population.

- Blood drawn whenever sheep are handled. November 2007 capture results pending.

Reduce the potential for disease transmission between feral goats and sheep and wild bighorn sheep.

- No issues reported at this time.

Reduce the negative impacts of human recreational activities on bighorn sheep.

- USFWS personnel analyzing use of lambing areas using sign-in stations and other data
- Sheep locations and use data from the New Mexico State University study.

Continue management of the Kofa NWR bighorn population as a transplant source herd.

- Transplants discontinued (last in 2005), may resume when population approaches long term average of 800 sheep.

Continue to offer bighorn sheep hunting opportunities consistent with sheep conservation objectives.

- 15 – 25% of the older age class rams (class III and IV).

Raise public awareness of the value of bighorn sheep on the Kofa NWR and the need for active management to maintain the value.

- Dedicated Kofa Sheep Restoration page on the Department website
- Numerous press releases and interviews.

Determine cause and extent of predation when bighorn population declines are documented.

- Data gathered from collared lions, monitor and locate kill sites
- New Mexico State research project to collar and track up to 45 sheep – cause of mortality (one mortality located so far – lion predation)
- Remote cameras used to determine lion patterns
- Lion scat analysis – results pending.

Reduce predation mortality on sheep while the population is below the long-term average of 800 and there is evidence that predation is limiting bighorn population recovery.

- Two lions lethally removed (off of the refuge) after they met the criteria to be classified as “offending lions”
- Male KM01 – known to have killed at least 5 sheep (tracked for three months)
- Male KM03 – known to have killed 6 sheep (tracked for five months).

Evidence that predation is limiting bighorn recovery:

- Sharp population decline coinciding with resident lion herd
- Decline did not reverse with improved climate conditions (2005)
- Similar decline did not occur in surrounding units
- Data from collared lions indicate significant predation on sheep: Estimated predation by lions (conservative) = 44 sheep per year
- 10 year average of yearling recruitment (@ a population of 460 animals) = 36 sheep per year.

Monitor recovery of the sheep population when predator control is implemented.

- Continue to monitor population annually until the sheep population approaches the long term average of 800 sheep.

Compared to other efforts around the country, the Department’s approach is the most conservative (Cougar Management Guidelines).

- Responsive management; data collection/analysis and management decisions based on that data
- Dispersing lions, sink and not a source population (Department research in 1995)
- Great lengths to identify offending individuals
- Conservative definition of “offending” individuals
- Sheep restoration is the goal, triggers set.

Additional notes:

- This is an important sheep herd
- There are biological limitations of bighorn sheep
- Lions in this area are not “Yuma puma” or genetically distinct from lion populations in the rest of Arizona.

Department approach:

- Active (not passive) management is needed
- The Department does not want to wait until it is an emergency
- Beyond risk of the decline becoming an emergency, as long as the herd is depressed we risk missing opportunities to use the KOFA sheep as a source population to recover other extirpated herds (e.g. Catalinas).

A determination was made that USFWS will need to complete an EA before predation management can proceed on the refuge. The Department has offered a one year moratorium on predation management efforts on the refuge. USFWS has released a scoping letter to obtain input into the Environmental Analysis process.

Proposed Department Action: As a cooperating agency, provide input and assist in drafting the EA and/or developing alternatives consistent with proposed actions outlined in the Investigative Report.

Chairman McLean clarified that the Department has offered “up to” a one year moratorium and is not bound to a one year moratorium.

Commissioner Hernbrode commented that the decline in Kofa sheep populations is a result of a combination of factors and not just from mountain lion predation, and he expects the Department to do the best possible science to find out what those factors are and to correct it.

Public Comment

Charlie Kelly, representing the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society (ADBSS) and the Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF), confirmed that the Commission received and read a letter from ADBSS sent to the Commission and also provided a letter from AWF that stated their views of the Kofa bighorn sheep herd situation. ADBSS and AWF agree that there are multiple factors resulting in the reduction of sheep, but while you cannot control the forage, you can improve the waters and control the lion predation problems.

The Commission discussed the issues with Mr. Kelly particularly as they relate to the controversy over killing lions and that the Department is following its guidelines for mountain lion management while dealing with USFWS issues and the EA process.

Motion: Woodhouse moved and Hernbrode seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO SUPPORT THE USFWS IN THE NEPA REVIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TO DEVELOP MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT ON THE KOFA; AND TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT, AS TRUSTEES OF THE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN ARIZONA, BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED.

Motion to Amend: McLean moved and Woodhouse seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO AMEND THE MOTION BY DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT TO PROACTIVELY MANAGE ALL THE SHEEP THROUGHOUT ARIZONA IN A PROACTIVE MANNER AND THAT THE PROACTIVE STATEWIDE SHEEP MANAGEMENT PLAN INCLUDE WHERE NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE A PROACTIVE LION MANAGEMENT PLAN THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF ARIZONA.

Mr. Odenkirk advised the Commission that the agenda item is focused primarily on the Kofa. If the Commission is just affirming what is already in place, then he is not concerned about the public meeting law, but if the Commission is expanding its policy statewide then that is not on the agenda and the public has not had prior notice.

Chairman McLean clarified that he is not expanding but stating and affirming what the policy is.

Commissioner Woodhouse withdrew his second.

Motion to Amend died for lack of second.

Commissioner Martin commented that she would vote aye on the original motion because even though she didn't see a vote as necessary, she understood that ADBSS and AWF want to see this vote to affirm that the Commission is behind active predator management related to the Kofa sheep herd.

Chairman McLean explained that he will vote aye because it simply supports the management of sheep and the management of lions in Arizona as it has been in the past, as it is currently, and as he knows it will continue to be in the future.

(Vote on original motion)

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

9. Request for Commission Approval of Federal Assistance Research Projects

Presenter: Chantal O'Brien, Research Branch Chief

The Department proposed to add three new research projects in FY 09. All projects would begin with a thorough literature review, study plan development, and formation of a scoping group including internal and external stakeholders and land managers. The three proposed projects were:

Large Carnivore Habitat Connectivity and Population Persistence – We propose to study large carnivore density, habitat use, and movements, beginning with black bears in the Sky Islands of Arizona. Housing development, transportation corridors, border fencing, and increasing wildlife nuisance issues all have the potential to negatively impact the metapopulation of black bears in southeast Arizona. This study will build upon hair snare work completed in the Huachuca Mountains during the summer of 2007. Results from the study are expected to aid in land management planning to help ensure continued connectivity for the black bear metapopulation and inform the hunt recommendation process. Several potential external funding partners have expressed interest in this work, including the Wildlife Conservation Society, which has already committed \$27,000 in funding and field assistance. There is potential for this study to eventually expand to include mountain lions depending upon management need and external funding availability.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Impact on Wildlife and Wildlife-related Recreation – Though considerable research is underway investigating OHV impacts on wildlife in forest biomes, studies in desert biomes appear to be rare. This research need was identified by all the Regions as a high priority during research prioritization over the last year. With the significant increase in OHV use in the state over the last decade and need to improve management of OHV recreation to allow for legal, enjoyable recreation opportunities while minimizing impact on state wildlife resources, more information is needed to best guide management strategies.

Bighorn Sheep - Mountain Lion Interactions – Though bighorn sheep and mountain lions occupy many of the same areas, mountain lion predation has been implicated in occasional, significant bighorn sheep population declines, such as those seen in the Kofa and Black mountains in the past several years. The Department proposes a multi-tiered research approach to conducting a risk assessment for bighorn sheep populations based upon data mining of existing datasets of bighorn sheep data and possible field research of existing bighorn sheep populations.

Public Comment

Charlie Kelly, ADBSS, addressed the Commission in support of all three research projects.

Chairman McLean clarified that a Commission vote to approve these projects does not necessarily mean that any or all of them will move forward. It will depend on funding and the Commission or Department may look to ADBSS for some of that funding.

Commissioner Martin asked Ms. O'Brien about what was expected from the study of bighorn sheep/mountain lion interactions.

Ms. O'Brien explained that the vision for the project was that managers would benefit from having a priori evidence negating or supporting predator control that allows a predictive perspective, that is provides biological triggers that, if present, might warrant proactive or reactive prescriptions for lethal predator reductions. The objective is to evaluate potential

methods for determining relative abundance and diets of mountain lions inhabiting areas where desert bighorn sheep populations are showing different trends. Research is designed to evaluate techniques that might be used either proactively or reactively for indexing potential impacts of mountain lion predation on bighorn sheep populations, thus potentially enhancing development of ecologically-based management prescriptions.

Motion: Hernbrode moved and Woodhouse seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT TO SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING THREE NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS AS PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM JOB STATEMENT TO FEDERAL ASSISTANCE: LARGE CARNIVORE HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND POPULATION PERSISTENCE, OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE IMPACT ON WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATION, AND BIGHORN SHEEP - MOUNTAIN LION INTERACTIONS.

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

Meeting recessed for lunch at 12:49 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 2:00 p.m.

* * * * *

15. Hearings on License Revocations for Violation of Game and Fish Codes and Civil Assessments for the Illegal Taking and/or Possession of Wildlife

Presenter: John Romero, Acting Law Enforcement Branch Chief

Record of these proceedings is maintained in a separate minutes book in the Director's Office.

* * * * *

Meeting recessed for a break at 3:20 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 3:50 p.m.

* * * * *

11A. Amendment to Commission Order 8 – Buffalo

Presenter: Mike Rabe, Small Game Management Supervisor

At the August 2007 Commission Meeting, the Commission authorized 10 permits for buffalo hunting on the House Rock Wildlife Area herd. The hunts were authorized for the period of January 1 through May 31, 2008. The Department was recently contacted by one of the permit holders that identified about seven permit holders experiencing difficulty in harvesting a buffalo because snow pack is restricting access and buffalo may be remaining on Grand Canyon National Park for an extended period. Department records indicate that three permit holders have harvested buffalo as of this date. The permit holder has requested an extension of the current season dates for the buffalo hunt on the House Rock Wildlife Area herd.

The Department believes the request by the permit holder is consistent with subsequently approved hunt guidelines for buffalo and may assist in attaining hunt management objectives for this herd. Furthermore, the Attorney General's Office has advised that bringing forth an amendment to an existing Commission Order in this manner is consistent with both law and rule.

Proposed Season Amendment: General Spring Buffalo Seasons

<u>Hunt No.</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>	<u>Open Areas</u>	<u>Legal Wildlife</u>	<u>Permits</u>
7020	Jan 1-Dec 31, 2008	Units 12A, 12B, and 13A	Any Buffalo	10

If approved, permit holders will be contacted by the Department to notify them of the season date changes. No other changes to the Commission Order are recommended except the extension of the season dates.

Commissioner Golightly confirmed with Mr. Rabe that there are currently approximately 80 buffalo at House Rock and further informed the Commission that he received a message this morning that two outfitters with clients were there right now and have seen 100+, not in one group but dispersed which included bulls, cows and calves. Commissioner Golightly questioned whether the hunters related to this request were not just holding out for bulls and not trying to pursue what is available. Commissioner Golightly suggested that rather than set a precedent of changing seasons at this point (due to snow, which has negatively impacted other hunts as well), the Commission might want to consider (for next year) entertaining the idea of getting a recommendation from the Department to allow for perhaps a nine month season. Additionally, the Commission should consider that the auction hunter has not hunted yet and to change the rules after he spent the time and money to buy the tag might reflect on the Commission's integrity relating to the auction tags.

Commissioner Hernbrode stated that the most important thing was to increase the harvest of buffalo and that he would like to give these hunters more opportunity to do that by approving this request.

Chairman McLean informed the Commission that he had also heard about multiple buffalo sightings at House Rock and further that he had heard from a guide, Mr. Eichelberger, who is up there right now and stated that he has seen buffalo and believed that buffalo would be taken. Mr. Eichelberger requested that the Commission not extend the general season.

Commissioner Woodhouse commented that granting this request would be setting a bit of a dangerous precedent and would likely cause some consternation for other buffalo hunters.

Commissioner Martin agreed with Commissioner Woodhouse and further stated that requests in other similar situations have been denied.

Commissioner Hernbrode directed the Department to contact all the remaining unfilled tag holders in Hunt 7020 and inform them that the buffalo are off the Grand Canyon National Park.

Motion: Woodhouse moved and Golightly seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO DENY THE REQUEST TO AMEND COMMISSION ORDER 8 – BUFFALO SEASONS.

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

12. Request for the Commission to Approve an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Department of Public Safety to Facilitate Cooperation in the State Fraudulent Identification Task Force

Presenter: John Romero, Acting Law Enforcement Branch Chief

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) was requested by the Governor's Office to participate in the Arizona Fraudulent Identification Task Force (AFIT) in 2007. The AFIT Charter was amended to include the investigation of several Game and Fish and watercraft crimes at the Department's request, and the Department provided one officer to AFIT. In December of 2007 AFIT, including the Department officer, was reorganized and moved from the Arizona Department of Homeland Security to the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). Following the transfer of AFIT to DPS, the Department was asked to enter into this agreement to formalize participation in the task force and to allow partial reimbursement to the Department for the officer's time.

Chairman McLean confirmed with Mr. Romero that the agreement with DPS is the same as with the Department of Homeland Security and there was no fiscal impact or change in budget.

Motion: Hernbrode moved and Woodhouse seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO FACILITATE COOPERATION IN THE STATE FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION TASK FORCE, AND EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS ATTACHED OR AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Vote: Unanimous

* * * * *

14. Call to the Public

Stephanie Nichols-Young, Animal Defense League of Arizona, addressed the Commission on agenda item 11B (Ms. Nichols-Young was not present when that item was addressed). Ms. Nichols-Young thanked the Commission for their stand on habitat issues including the Wilderness proposal and the State Wildlife Action Plans, and also encouraged the Commission to continue to work closely with conservation and non-consumptive wildlife organizations. Regarding item 11B, Ms. Nichols-Young suggested a more broad dialogue on bighorn sheep and lions across the state, that information about working groups be more accessible, and that more concern and attention be placed on potential bighorn sheep diseases.

* * * * *

16. Director and Chairman's Report

Director Voyles began with his report with the 2008 Heritage Grant Awards. Each year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department makes hundreds of thousands of dollars available in its Heritage grant program to applicants with environmental education and wildlife projects that might otherwise not receive funding. The Department has awarded over 640 Heritage grants totaling more than \$12 million dollars statewide from 1992 through 2007. Twelve Heritage Grant Workshops were held in seven cities during August 2007. Thirty-three applications were received by the November 30 deadline and the following seventeen projects are being awarded. The Commission was provided with a binder containing copies of the award recipients and project descriptions prior to this meeting.

Director Voyles announced the following 2008 Heritage Grant Awards:

Environmental Education received two applications. Available amount: \$32,000.00. The following two education programs were awarded 2007-2008 E.E. grants.

1. Tanque Verde Unified School District, for the project: Agua Caliente Elementary School Bone Box. Award amount: \$1,235.00.
2. Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, for the project: Lake Pleasant Desert Outdoor Center Environmental Education Microscopes. Award amount: \$7,500.00.

Schoolyard Habitat received seven applications. Available amount: \$37,500.00. The following four schools were awarded 2007-2008 Schoolyard grants.

1. Yuma School District, for the project: Desert Mesa Hands-On Wildlife Habitat. Award amount: \$8,168.00.
2. Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy, for the project: Pollinator Habitat Garden. Award amount: \$9,720.00.
3. San Fernando School District, for the project: Desert Grassland Wildlife Habitat. Award amount: \$9,612.00.
4. Tucson Unified School District, for the project: White School Desert Wildlife Habitat and Outdoor Learning Center. Award amount: \$10,000.00.

Urban received eight applications. Amount available: \$112,500.00. The following four agencies were awarded 2007-2008 Urban grants.

1. Pima County, for the project: Viewing Blinds at Catalina Regional Park. Award amount: \$26,950.00.
2. Pima County, for the project: Wildlife Viewing Guides. Award amount: \$19,368.00.
3. Maricopa County, for the project: White Tank Regional Park Nature Pond. Award amount: \$48,200.00.

4. Town of Pinetop-Lakeside, for the project: Pinetop Lakeside Watchable Wildlife Guide. Award amount: \$10,000.00.

Public Access received two applications. The amount available is \$50,000. The following two agencies were awarded 2007-2008 Public Access grants.

1. Cochise County, for the project: Coffman Road Access Project. Award amount: \$40,600.00.
2. University of Arizona, for the project: Design Guidelines for Public Access and Along Airport Wash. Award amount: \$9,400.00.

IIAPM received fourteen applications. Amount available: \$320,000.00. The following five agencies were awarded 2007-2008 IIAPM grants.

1. New Mexico State University, for the project: Desert Tortoise as Tree Rings - A Stable Isotope approach to Nutritional Ecology. Award amount: \$59,543.00.
2. New Mexico State University, for the project: Inventory of the Meadow Jumping Mouse in Arizona. Award amount: \$79,778.00.
3. University of Arizona, for the project: California Floater Genetics. Award amount: \$58,176.00.
4. University of Arizona, for the project: Managing Rails with Fire in Arizona. Award amount: \$63,755.00.
5. Northern Arizona University, for the project: Estimating Survival of Translocated Gunnisons Prairie Dogs. Award amount: \$45,630.00.

Director Voyles further reported on the following activities since the April Commission meeting:

- Attended the Spring 2008 IWJV Management Board Meeting at The Nature Conservancy's Zapata Ranch in the San Luis Valley, Colorado; was able to have input in the process of dispersing NAWCC project dollars; toured and observed a number of projects taking place in the San Luis Valley
- Met with Director Bell at ADOA along with Deputy Director Ferrell and Diana Shaffer regarding HR issues including exceptions to the hiring freeze; approximately 32 hiring requests were approved
- Met with Joe Stringer from the Coconino Forest Service. Discussion included: Willard Springs Shooting Range timeframes, schedules, Forest Plan Revision, Travel Management Rule, communication between the agencies, West Fork of Oak Creek Gila Trout project, and received an update on influences he sees affecting the Forest Service in the next 3-5 years; mostly a meet and greet, no significant solutions or outcomes
- Met with Robert Mesta and Department staff regarding the Sonoran Joint Venture; Mr. Mesta expressed his desire that the Department continue to have a present on the Board of the Sonoran Joint Venture; a written request will be forthcoming

- Attended the Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council; the Governor's staff is pleased with the progress made by this group and has given approval for the Council to move forward
- Attended the Governor's Cabinet Meeting
- Participated in the Governor's Natural Resources weekly conference calls
- Attended and participated in a Sportsmen for Wildlife meeting
- Attended the Trilateral Conference in Veracruz, Mexico; was able to meet with the Director and Regional Director of USFWS; met with the Director of Semarnat and reinforced the Department's desire to work collaboratively and identify joint projects under our recently signed MOU; was a good opportunity to see the quality of work done by the Department and also to see the local, state, national, regional and global significance of our participation in those kinds of projects

Director Voyles further announced that Department employee Marianne Meding and Brian McGraw from the Department of Agriculture, two individuals that spearheaded Department efforts with the Invasive Species Advisory Council, were both recognized this month at the Governor's Cabinet meeting for the quality of their work.

Chairman McLean reported the following activities since the April Commission meeting:

- Went turkey hunting
- Met with the Senior Policy Advisor at the Governor's Office to discuss the position the Department and Commission was taking with regard to a number of items of interest to the Governor and her staff
- Attended the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation banquet and fundraiser; the fundraiser went very well despite the state of the economy
- Spent a lot of time on the phone with the Tony Guiles, Simone Hall and Commission Martin trying to resolve legislative issues reported by Mr. Guiles earlier in this meeting
- Flew to Boise to attend an international conference along with Ron Sieg and Kathy Sullivan to deal with issues regarding lead ammunition and possible effects it may be having on wildlife with emphasis on condors

* * * * *

17. Commissioner's Reports

Commissioner Woodhouse:

- Participated in the May 1, 2008 Telephonic Commission meeting
- Visited with a few constituents in the Yuma area on the Adair Range and on the Kofa item on today's agenda.

Commissioner Martin:

- Attended an Earth Day event hosted by the Arizona League of Conservation Voters at the Botanical Garden
- Participated in the May 1, 2008 Telephonic Commission meeting
- Participated in an ongoing research project on turtles in the pond in front of the Phoenix Zoo
- Met with staff on a couple of different issues

- Met with the Governor's Natural Resources Advisor on several issues
- Worked with staff on getting the Conservationist Committee up and running; the first meeting will be July 26.

Commissioner Hernbrode:

- Participated in the May 1, 2008 Telephonic Commission meeting
- Met with the Altar Valley Alliance to talk about access and road issues.

Commissioner Golightly:

- Participated in the normal functions of a Game and Fish Commissioner.

* * * * *

18. Approval of Minutes and Signing of Minutes

Motion: Golightly moved and Martin seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 18-19, 2008 AND MAY 1, 2008.

Vote: Unanimous

Following approval, the Commission signed the minutes from April 18-19, 2008 and May 1, 2008.

* * * * *

19. Future Agenda Items

Chairman McLean requested a presentation on the Maricopa County dust abatement ordinances and a report on any potential expansion of this type of regulation to other counties.

Deputy Director Ferrell noted the following future agenda and action items:

- Discuss with the Commission at a future meeting the means to get a diverse group together to discuss wildlife management in wilderness areas in an effort to reach consensus on that topic
- Provide presentations on the State Land Reform Initiative and the Transportation Initiatives at the June Commission meeting and if they make it onto the ballot then have time scheduled in August for the proponents and opponents to provide informational presentations to the Commission
- Assist with marketing the fund raising efforts of the Arizona Shooting Sports Education Foundation as opportunities at Department as opportunities present themselves
- Look into reserving clay target ranges so it could be used exclusively by instructors for training beginning shooters
- Stay involved in the Kofa NEPA process
- Make contact with the unfilled tag holders in hunt 7020 and inform them that buffalo are on House Rock

* * * * *

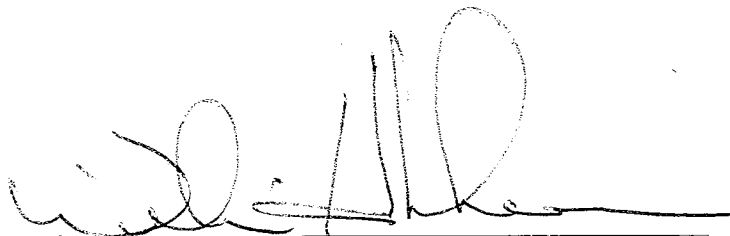
Motion: Golightly moved and Martin seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADJOURN THIS MEETING.

Vote: Unanimous

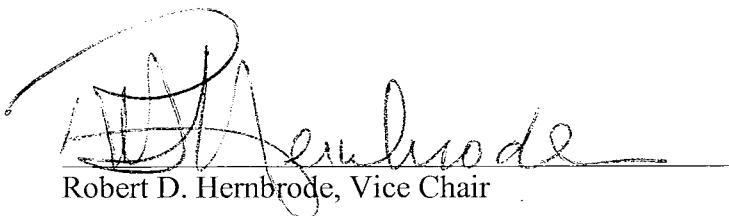
* * * * *

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

* * * * *



William H. McLean, Chair



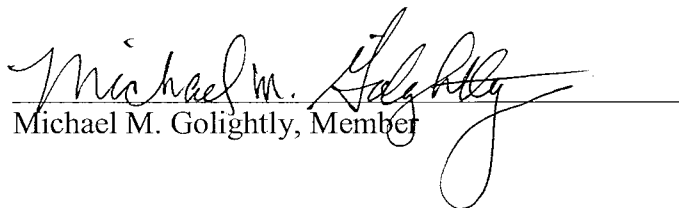
Robert D. Hernbrode, Vice Chair



Jennifer L. Martin, Member

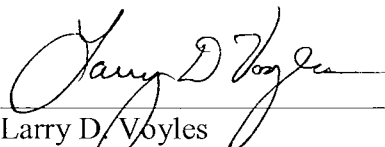


Robert R. Woodhouse, Member



Michael M. Golightly, Member

ATTEST:



Larry D. Voyles
Secretary and Director

Game and Fish Litigation Report
Presented at the Commission Meeting
May 16, 2008

The Assistant Attorneys General for the Arizona Game and Fish Commission and the Arizona Game and Fish Department are representing these agencies in the following matters in litigation. This report does not include claims and lawsuits for damages against these agencies in which the agencies are represented by Assistant Attorneys General in the Liability Defense Section of the Attorney General's Office.

1. *Wilderness Watch, Inc. et al. v. United States Fish and Wildlife Service et al., CV01185-MHM.* Plaintiffs filed suit on June 15, 2007, challenging the decision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("FWS") to redevelop two water structures on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. The water structures provide supplemental water to wildlife populations that have suffered due to persistent drought. Plaintiffs allege that these water developments violate the National Environmental Policy Act because the FWS did not first determine the environmental impact of these projects. Plaintiffs also allege that such permanent structures are prohibited by the Wilderness Act. Plaintiffs seek declaratory and injunctive relief. They are asking the court to find that the FWS violated the law and to order the FWS to remove the structures.

The Commission has voted to file an application with the court to intervene on behalf of the FWS. Any court order finding that the FWS violated federal law will impair the Commission's ability to restore the wildlife populations in the refuge and in other wilderness areas in Arizona. The Attorney General's Office anticipates that a motion to intervene will be filed by August 15th.

On August 7, 2007, the State filed its Motion to Intervene. Plaintiffs, in response to the State's motion, did not object to the State's permissive intervention, so long as the court imposes restrictions on the State's participation, such as page limits, requiring the State to file joint briefs with the other intervenors, and prohibiting the State from duplicating arguments made by the federal defendants. On August 29, 2007, the State filed a reply in support of its Motion to Intervene and opposed any restrictions on the State's intervention.

On August 20, 2007, the State also filed a response to plaintiffs' Motion for Temporary Restraining Order.

On August 30, 2007, the federal defendants filed an answer to plaintiffs First Amended Complaint.

The court has issued a scheduling order for the parties to file motions for summary judgment. The plaintiffs' motion is due December 14, 2007; the defendants' cross-motion and response is due February 1, 2008; plaintiffs' response/reply is due February 29, 2008 and defendants' reply is due March 14, 2008.

Plaintiffs have withdrawn their motion for a temporary restraining order so the status quo will remain until the court rules on the motions for summary judgment.

As for the motions to intervene filed by the State of Arizona and various conservation organizations, the court has indicated it will not likely rule on these motions prior to the time the

parties file their motions for summary judgment. The court, however, granted permission to the applicants for intervention to file motions for summary judgment. Also, the plaintiffs stated on the record that they have no objection to the State of Arizona intervening in the case.

On February 1, 2008, the State of Arizona, the Federal Defendants and Conservation Groups filed separate cross motions for summary judgment and responses to Plaintiffs' summary judgment motion.

On February 29, 2008, Plaintiffs filed a response to the cross motions for summary judgment. Defendants have until March 14, 2008, to file replies.

On March 4, 2008, the court granted the motions to intervene by the State of Arizona and the Conservation Groups.

On March 14, 2008, the State of Arizona and the other defendants filed replies to the plaintiffs' cross motion for summary judgment.

On April 2, 2008, the organization Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility ("PEER") filed a motion for leave to file an amicus curie brief in support of the plaintiffs' cross motion for summary judgment. At the same time, PEER lodged its amicus brief with the court clerk. Each defendant has filed a response opposing PEER's motion for leave. Not only is the motion untimely, the brief that PEER has lodged contains many additional factual assertions not included in the administrative record. This attempt to supplement the administrative record with new information violates the established law in this area.

On May 7, 2008, the court issued an order setting oral argument on the cross motions for summary judgment for June 12, 2008. The court also ordered the parties to provide supplemental briefing on whether the Wilderness Act or the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act is controlling. This brief is due June 3, 2008.

(5/12/08) (JFO/SDC)

Lands Update
For the Arizona Game and Fish Commission
May 8, 2008
Prescott, Arizona

FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Department continues to work closely with all the Forests regarding travel management planning. Throughout the process the Department has advocated for consistent changes to any travel management including dispersed camping, route closures, and motorized big game retrieval (MBGR). To date, the Department still has concerns about the scope and consistency by which the MBGR will be deployed by the different Forests.

Kaibab National Forest

The Williams Ranger District has released a proposed action for the Travel Management Rule. Region II is reviewing the proposed action.

SB 1441 HABITAT RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT FUND

Chitty Creek Restoration

Since the last reporting period the Clifton Ranger District conducted prescribed burning on approximately 7,400 acres. The SB 1441 funded portion of the Chitty Creek Restoration Project is now complete.

Sheep Wash Ecosystem Restoration

Since the last reporting period the Clifton Ranger District completed an additional 200 acres of thinning on the NO Bar portion of the project area.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Department personnel met with the Forest on March 11 to discuss details of Apache trout recovery projects in Apache and Greenlee counties. The main issues discussed included chemical removal of non-native trout, fish barrier maintenance, and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) analysis for certain projects. With potency and availability issues with the chemical antimycin, the Forest and the Department set a course of action to begin a NEPA analysis to evaluate the use of rotenone, a chemical similar to antimycin to remove non-native trout. Detailed maintenance needs on fish barriers were outlined and a plan was developed to professionally evaluate the integrity and needs of each barrier, plus evaluate the use of helicopters to bring in the necessary equipment on the larger barriers.

Department personnel met with biologists from the Forest and US Fish and Wildlife Service to place a staff gage, which measures the water being diverted, on Rudd Creek on April 9. This gage was part of an agreement under a special use permit to operate a water diversion for the

Sipe Wildlife Area in Apache County. Opportunities to improve stream conditions on Rudd Creek to benefit threatened Little Colorado spinedace were also discussed.

Coconino National Forest

The Department responded to a proposed action for the Fossil Creek Allotment Management Plan. Fossil Creek is one of the first allotment management plans to be prepared under new rules which rely on adaptive management and monitoring to determine management with very loose guidance from the planning. Most of the Department's comments dealt with the new rules and our inability to determine impacts or desired mitigation from very loosely defined actions. The Forest will now make a decision based on comments received on the proposed action. The decision maybe one of the proposals offered to date, or a new proposal.

As part of the design discussions for the Upper Beaver Creek project we have been discussing protecting turkey movement corridors. The discussion has centered on how to place those corridors on the landscape and how to manage the habitat in the corridors. Part of the project falls within a very important turkey wintering area and the Region and the Forest took this action to ensure turkey habitat is maintained. This project area is part of where the Beaver Creek watershed studies were conducted in the 1960s and 70s.

Coronado National Forest

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Pinaleno Ecosystem Restoration Project will be ready for internal forest review soon, after which it will go out for public review. The Forest has worked closely with the Department to develop this proposal that will address both the forest health needs and the sensitive wildlife needs. A major objective of the project is to protect the habitat of the Mount Graham red squirrel.

The Douglas Ranger district is working on a water project on the Middle March Allotment. The project includes a new well to serve three water drinkers in addition to an enclosed wildlife water to benefit both big-game and non-game species. A Habitat Partnership Committee Grant was awarded to construct a wetland habitat that will benefit Chiricahua Leopard Frogs. The project has been initiated and will be complete by fall 2008.

Kaibab National Forest

Region II has continued to be involved in planning meetings on the McCracken and Bracken fuels projects and on the Buckhorn and Walker Basin Allotment Management Plans. These projects are proceeding toward developing a proposed action.

A meeting was held with the Forest to discuss pronghorn management along a movement corridor south of Bill Williams Mountain. Department and Forest personnel tracked two groups of pronghorn moving west from Garland Prairie through the forest in new snow. In addition to information from a few radiolocations and some observations from 20 years ago they were able to accurately describe the route. The route covered approximately 20 miles, and much of it lay through dense forest. The meeting dealt with how to manage the habitat along this migration route. A power point presentation, by the Department, using GPS locations and photographs

from the tracking effort was very effective in convincing the Forest to consider pronghorn needs in how they manage this area.

Region II held our yearly coordination meeting with the Forest. Issues discussed were:

- Progress on the Travel Management Rule
- Progress on Forest Plan Revision
- Project prioritization
- Fuels reduction projects
- Area Conservation Priority Map
- Leopard Frog Management
- Condor Management

Prescott National Forest and BLM Phoenix District Office

The Department is working with the Forest to complete NEPA in order to begin juniper thinning on approximately 2600 acres of grassland that is primarily movement corridor for the Unit 21 pronghorn population between core habitat areas. This project is an extension of the work completed on BLM land on Sycamore Mesa. The overall target for juniper and prescribed fire treatments between BLM and Forest lands is approximately 5,000 acres. Nearly half of the target is complete. Both BLM and Forest fire crews are treating cut areas with fire after the cuts. Plans are to expand juniper thinning into new areas as the currently planned targets are completed. The grassland habitat improvement work will continue well into the future as thousands of acres are in need of treatment. Currently the Department has a contractor working on 250 acres of BLM land.

Tonto National Forest

The Canyon Creek Riparian Restoration Project is ongoing. Arizona Water Protection Grant deliverables are near completion and the contract period will end within the next few months. Current activities included completion of the 2007 monitoring report and final report, completion of the design and manufacture of educational signs for the project, and development of a web page. Later this month volunteers from AZ Flycasters, Desert Flycasters, Zane Grey TU, Payson Flycasters and Mogollon Sportsmans Association will be helping to repair damages from snow and floods to elk-livestock exclosures during the past winter. Several of the clubs have pledged support either in labor or money to renovate the wood frame structure of the kiosks that the new educational signs will be posted to, and to fund the manufacture of new watchable wildlife signs for the area. New fishing regulation signs will also be installed. The Department contracted for a watershed study and fish habitat enhancement designs to identify future measures that can be implemented to improve riparian and fish habitat quality. The watershed report and habitat enhancement engineering designs will be complete by the end of the FY. The next phase of the project will focus on keeping exclosures repaired and completing environmental compliance documentation to implement the enhancement plans. Currently, we anticipate that habitat enhancements will be installed in phases beginning fiscal year 2011.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)

Phoenix District Office

A mine known as the Sunrise Relief Mine in Peoria, just NE of 91st Ave. and Happy Valley Road, has been identified for closure to address safety concerns on BLM land. The BLM is working with an adjacent developer and the city of Peoria to address safety issues related to the mine. Currently the mine shaft is fenced with a 10 ft. chain link fence. The mine is considered an important winter roost site for California leaf-nosed bat, a Species of Concern (Endangered Species Act) and Wildlife of Special Concern in Arizona. The Department has met with BLM, Bats Conservation International (BCI), a representative from the AZ State Mine Inspectors Office, and MK Company (engineering firm for the developer) and the City of Peoria to discuss alternatives to closure in order to protect the site for bats. All parties have agreed that the site should be protected for bats and cupola, which is a grated box that covers the mine entrance, type structure should be used to secure the site and maintain the bat roost. The group has discussed involving the local neighborhood as it becomes developed to become site stewards, along with future “watchable wildlife” opportunity. BLM has agreed to complete NEPA. The Department, BCI and BLM will work on design and funding for the cupola. The Department and BCI will coordinate population monitoring and develop partnerships with adjacent land owners. MK Company will landscape along the roadside to shield the bat cupola and possibly place boulders to minimize potential vehicle access to the site. The City of Peoria will talk with Happy Valley Rd contractors about installing a berm to limit motorized access to the mine and will look into developing signage for the site highlighting the collaboration and focal species. A road is planned for the development that will cross over the area where the mine shafts are located. A geological survey will be used to verify the surface stability for the road without filling the mine shaft.

The BLM is considering a proposal for an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use area in the Buckeye Hills adjacent to our Gila River Wildlife Areas. The proposal is from Buckeye Parks and Maricopa County Parks. The Department approached the BLM last year for a Recreation & Public Purpose lease for these lands and were told to go forward with a cooperative management agreement with BLM. The Department is working with interested agencies to find a solution acceptable to all parties. Before the BLM goes forward, they would like to have funding for a feasibility assessment that costs \$200,000-\$500,000. The next meeting will be a field reconnaissance on May 29th.

Arizona Strip Field Office

The Department continues to coordinate closely with the Field Office (FO) in development of implementation-level plans, including Travel Management Plans and associated route networks.

Havasu Field Office

The Lake Havasu Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan were released on July 9, 2007. The Department continues to coordinate closely with the Field Office in the development of subsequent implementation-level plans, including Travel Management Plans and associated route designations.

Hassayampa Field Office

The Hassayampa Field Office is developing a comprehensive Travel Management Plan for Central Arizona public lands, and is seeking public input to help determine where to provide connectivity for increased recreational value while minimizing impacts to the land and other resources. The Department provided input during public meetings regarding road and trail designations in the Bumble Bee, Table Mesa, Lake Pleasant, and San Domingo Wash areas and will continue to participate throughout the route designation process.

Lower Sonoran Field Office

The BLM is preparing a preliminary preferred alternative draft Resource Management Plan to be released for public review. The Department continues to participate in cooperative meetings and proactively develop comments throughout the planning process.

Kingman Field Office

“In-Field” meetings were conducted on the Big Ranch Grazing Allotment on March 27, 2008 and April 3, 2008 to measure Utilization in the East Pasture. Several hours were spent at Study Site 8 measuring past years use and instructing those unfamiliar with this monitoring device about the methods and about plant identification. This site was determined by the group to exhibit “light use” of Key Grass Species, Galleta (25%) and Bush Muhly (32%) and light use on Mormon Tea. The evidence of livestock presence at this site was scarce. The group continued to Deep Well up north near Senator Mountain where the Permittee is trying to find a way to get water to this part of the East Pasture. There were discussions on funding other possible sources of water if the well proves unproductive and possible impacts to tortoises. It was agreed by all that more information is needed on the location of Tortoises. Additionally, the Permittee explained that it would be most beneficial to his grazing operation if the water was directed east and away from the identified tortoise habitat. This water placement would help mitigate potential tortoise cattle conflict. As for the water development, two drilling attempts have failed and future sources of funds for drilling remain elusive. It was determined by the BLM Range Specialist for Big Ranch that there was no need to monitor the West Pasture because of almost no growth last year for perennial grasses to collect data for utilization.

On April 3 utilization was determined at Study Sites 9 and 12. At site 9 “light use” was identified on key species Galleta (28%) and Bush Muhly (22%) and 30% on Mormon Tea. Evidence of livestock or recent indications of livestock presence were absent. Some dead Bush Muhly were observed and documented, a recent drought was determined as the cause. At site 12 the group viewed an area not grazed over the past year and probably for several years. Study site 12 has a recent history of fire. It was determined after the two days of meetings, to perform other monitoring at all study sites on this allotment including Trend, Upland Health Assessment, and Dry Weight Ranking after the monsoon rains in the fall of 2008.

Yuma Field Office

The Yuma Final Resource Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) has been released to the public. The Department is currently working with BLM on development of the La Posa Travel Management Plan.

Safford Field Office

The Department is working closely with the Field Office in all phases of the travel management plan. The Gila Box unit was just finished and the remainder of the plan will be evaluated in the near future.

Tucson Field Office

The Field Office is currently developing a preferred alternative for the Middle Gila Canyons Transportation Plan in Game Management Unit 37B near Florence Junction. The Department and the public have provided extensive input on this plan. The BLM expects the plan to be available this summer. The final draft Environmental Assessment is currently being reviewed internally by BLM Staff.

The Field Office is actively pursuing the terms of their 1997 Conservation Easement that allows non-motorized public access across the San Pedro River at Dudleyville. Pinal County had a temporary right of way across the river after the 1993 flood washed out the bridge in Winkelman. The bridge was never rebuilt and the landowner decided not to renew the right of way. The County has now condemned the road as a permanent easement. The route across the river is now physically open to vehicles, but is signed closed by BLM. The Department has worked for many years to combat illegal OHV trespass into the river bottom. OHV damage is a serious problem along the lower San Pedro, much of which is privately owned by the mines. Illegal OHV use is the main reason the landowner desires closure to vehicles since enforcement has not solved the problem. It is unclear what effect the easement will have on access along the Camino Rio to the south which is also signed closed. This road provides access to the east side of the San Pedro between Dudleyville and Mammoth. The nearest access to the Camino Rio south of Dudleyville is at the Triangle Bar Ranch eight miles to the south.

BLM NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument / Vermillion Cliffs National Monument

The proposed final RMP/EIS was released on March 2, 2007 for the Arizona Strip planning area including the Grand Canyon-Parashant and Vermillion Cliffs National Monuments. The proposed final plan includes a series of unique route networks and designations.

Agua Fria National Monument

The draft RMP/EIS public review period ended on April 5, 2006 and the proposed final plan is expected to be released early 2008. The Department will be working closely with BLM to address submitted comments pertaining to wildlife and wildlife management.

Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM)

The BLM is preparing a preliminary preferred alternative draft Resource Management Plan in association with the Lower Sonoran management area to be released for public review. The Department continues to participate in cooperative meetings and proactively develop comments throughout the planning process.

BLM is planning on closing approximately the northern third of the SDNM to all vehicle entry early this year due to environmental damage caused by OHV use. The area to be closed is north

of State Route 238 and the closure is expected to be in effect for 2-3 years. The Department will continue to work with BLM to regain vehicular access for wildlife-related recreation, including hunting, as expeditiously as possible.

Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM)

The Tucson Field Office (TFO) has indicated that they are near completion of a final Environmental Impact Statement for the Ironwood Forest National Monument. The Department has asked to meet with TFO before the final EIS goes to the public. Target shooting is still likely to be heavily restricted or eliminated in the preferred alternative.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

The final Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Refuge has been released and we are awaiting a Record of Decision.

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

The Department continues to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to plan, fund, and implement actions to aid restoration of the bighorn sheep population on the Kofa NWR. Using GPS data from the collar of the lion that was removed in March, Department and Refuge personnel have confirmed that 7 mule deer and 6 bighorn sheep were killed by that lion between October 21, 2007 and March 29, 2008. The Department has decided to suspend lethal removal of lions captured and collared on Kofa for up to one year. This is being done to allow the FWS time to finalize their mountain lion management plan and related Environmental Assessment (EA). Efforts to capture, collar, and monitor additional lions on Kofa are ongoing. More complete information on the management of bighorn sheep, lions, and water on the Kofa NWR can be found on the Department's web site. This web site is updated monthly.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

Yuma Proving Ground

The U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is considering expanding up to 500,000 acres into Game Management Unit 41 through a withdrawal of BLM land. YPG is currently evaluating the possible expansion internally and has not developed or presented a formal proposal or application to further define the purpose, need, location, and details of the proposed expansion. The Department will be actively involved in this process and will provide the Commission with more information as it becomes available.

GENERAL UPDATES

ADOT

Phoenix/Tucson I-10 Bypass

The Department continues to monitor the progress of the two remaining bypass routes being studied. The Aravaipa Route would bisect the groundwater-rich Sulphur Springs Valley, increasing its value for future development, and then wind between the Galiuro and Aravaipa Wilderness areas in the rugged Fourmile and Copper Creek Canyon areas before crossing the San Pedro to join up with the existing I-10 Corridor. The report commissioned by ADOT finds that two routes are necessary to have any significant effect on traffic in the Tucson area. Therefore the Department expects both the Aravaipa and Avra Valley routes to gain considerable traction in future planning.

Environmental Interests Focus Group

The Department participated in the Environmental Interests Focus Group for the Central Arizona Regional Framework Study hosted by MAG and partners in Globe. The study is midway through an 18 month process to establish long-range transportation networks (multimodal) for Pinal and a portion of Gila counties. This plan includes the eastern portion of Pinal County and the communities of Globe, Miami and Hayden in Gila County. The study is a regional plan that will establish recommendations that tier to a statewide framework study. The study does not replace site specific local studies, but creates the general location where alternatives would be developed for local transportation plans. One representative from Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and the Department were the sole attendees. We discussed regional environmental or conservation issues including: wildlife habitat fragmentation, site specific connectivity needs and opportunities, the need for early coordination with the Department, and reference to the AZ linkages map and upcoming ACP model. A few primary issues identified so far by previous participants focus on the need for transportation develop. Priorities included: a bypass alternative for US-60 and enhance existing route; improve SR-177, SR-77 and SR-79, develop a north-south between Coolidge/Florence and Apache Junction, improve connectivity between Florence and I-10. The Department will continue to develop input for the regional planning effort.

State Route 260 Widening Heber to Show Low

Department personnel continue to coordinate with ADOT in the preparation of a Location/Design Concept Report (L/DCR) and environmental studies for the realignment and/or redesign of State Route 260 from Heber to Show Low. The Pinetop Region attended a planning meeting in Tempe at the offices of the consulting firm PB Americas on April 10th to discuss potential issues in the highway redesign process. Department personnel prepared a comment letter and map outlining general and specific recommendations to be considered in this process. Major issues day lighted for consideration in this planning process include wildlife permeability across the new highway design and reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. The map developed by the Department displayed mile posts and existing bridge and culvert structures along the affected portion of the highway. The purpose of the map was to visually display the density and spatial arrangement of existing and potential wildlife crossing structures for consideration in the proposed highway redesign. Overall the information was very well received by the planning

team and the Department will continue to be involved in the development of design alternatives to insure that wildlife permeability is considered in the process.

Arizona State Land Department (ASLD)

The Arizona State Land Department recently completed a study of urban trust lands located north of Oro Valley and south of the Pinal County line in Pima County. This area is identified as the Arroyo Grande area. The ASLD, for the first time, has incorporated an open space component in the plan. Oro Valley is considering annexing the entire parcel. If Oro Valley annexes, Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan would no longer apply to the area. This area is between the Santa Catalina and Tortolita Mountains and contains a significant wildlife linkage between the two. The Department has met with ASLD and is also on the Technical Advisory Team to Oro Valley. There are representatives from several very vocal environmental groups also on this team.

The Arizona State Land Department has approached the Department and the Fish and Wildlife Service about doing a Habitat Conservation Plan for State Trust Lands in Pinal County. This will involve both Regions V and VI. A meeting is scheduled for May 12th.

bqAZ – Statewide Transportation Planning Framework

The Arizona State Transportation Board has recently allocated resources for a statewide collaborative transportation planning process called Building a Quality Arizona, or "bqAZ" to quantify transportation needs statewide and to identify the full range of options to address those needs. The long-range focus of the studies will identify the State's transportation needs in the 2030-2050 timeframe. The State is broken up into four Regional Planning Framework Studies: Western Arizona, Northern Arizona, Central Arizona, and Eastern Arizona. These Regional Frameworks are then broken down into Focus Areas. The Regional Framework planning efforts will also be integrated with 1) the adopted Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and Pima Association of Governments (PAG) Regional Transportation Plans, and 2) the I-10 Hassayampa Valley & I-8/I-10 Hidden Valley Transportation Plans currently under development. The project website is www.bqaz.org.

Department personnel attended the preliminary stakeholders meeting for the bqAZ Statewide ADOT planning framework for the Central and Eastern planning areas as well as several public meetings held in the region. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss anticipated population growth and development in the region, particularly in relation to the Sun Corridor. The Nature Conservancy's "Natural Infrastructure" map was displayed to show major wildlife habitats. The Department has not been involved in the development of the Natural Infrastructure map nor had a seat at the table in developing this plan before it went out for public comment.

Border Fence Waiver

In a news brief, dated April 1, 2008, from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) it was announced that two new waivers will be issued in order to expedite the security improvements along the southwest border of the United States. One waiver encompassing roughly 470 miles in California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas applies to certain environmental and land management laws. The other waiver pertains to the levee-border barrier project in Hidalgo County, Texas. Environmental restrictions were waived on three previous occasions, Sept. 13,

2005 for roughly 14 miles near San Diego, Jan 12, 2007 for a section near Barry M. Goldwater Range in Arizona, and Oct 26, 2007 for an area near San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area in Arizona. On April 28, 2008 a joint field hearing was convened by the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands and the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans. The hearing, entitled “Walls and Waivers: Expedited Construction of the Southern Border Wall and the Collateral Impacts on Communities and the Environment,” examined the social and environmental implications of the proposed 700-mile fence to be built by the Department of Homeland Security along the U.S.-Mexico border. A letter from the Commission was included into the hearing record as well as sent to the Arizona Congressional Delegation.

Byner Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP)

Region III personnel attended the April 14, 2008 Lower Mohave County Rangeland Coordinated Management Team meeting, and the Byner Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) meeting in Kingman, hosted by the US Department of Agriculture’s local Natural Resource Conservation Service branch. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate the development of a CRMP for the Byner Allotment – which is currently up for renewal by the BLM. Region III personnel visited Byner Ranch’s Bagdad allotment on April 30th to discuss the possibility of providing assistance with 3-4 waters that are currently non-functional due to thefts. The lessee hopes to renovate windmills at the sites – providing year-round waters that could benefit wildlife. A ranch visit for all stakeholders is scheduled for May 8, 2008, with a follow-up CRMP meeting scheduled for May 20, 2008.

City of Coolidge Annexation

City of Coolidge staff presented the Department’s request for hunting areas set aside within the annexation area to the City Council. At this time there is no word as to their decision, but it is expected to pass. The Department will pursue similar agreements with other cities within the Sun Corridor in the near future.

Coconino County

Coconino County held a dedication ceremony for a monument denoting Picture Canyon as a National Historic Site. Most of the activities focus on the archaeology of Picture Canyon and the history of its conservation. A group of organizations is working toward protecting Picture Canyon including archaeology, historic sites, and wildlife habitat.

Fugitive Dust Abatement Issues

Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) personnel continue to work with Maricopa County Department of Air Quality, Sheriff’s Office, County Parks, Arizona State Parks, Arizona State Land Department, the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Pinal County Board of Supervisors to implement the recently enacted P-28 and P-27 Ordinances. These strict liability ordinances are designed to address dust abatement issues in unincorporated areas of Maricopa County by making operation or parking of vehicles on lands not part of a recognized road or trail system, or private roads or easements identified by the land owner as open to public access, unlawful. The Maricopa County Department of Air Quality has indicated that in May they will initiate drafting an enforcement policy for the implementation of the

Ordinances to exempt those lawfully engaged in hunting and fishing, but to date they have not committed to a deadline for completion.

The Pinal County Board of Supervisors has also indicated their intent to enact a similar Ordinance in portions of Pinal County, specifically the area surrounding Desert Wells, an area where the Department is an active cooperator with the Arizona State Land Department, Arizona State Parks, Arizona Off Highway Vehicle Coalition and several private land owners of a special OHV management area.

Most recently, the City of Scottsdale confirmed their intentions to enact a similar Ordinance around the Granite Mountain Off Highway Vehicle recreation area. The Department is also an active cooperator in this area, and is involved with the same groups as Desert Wells.

The Department will continue to actively seek opportunities to provide input in the policy process for both counties with hunter and angler access as a priority, and stress the urgency in completing the Maricopa County policy prior to August of 2008.

Gould's Turkey

In April, Gould's turkey surveys were conducted in the Huachuca Mountains. Not all route data are yet in, but so far 154 turkeys were observed, including 22 adult gobblers, 41 jakes, 85 hens, and 6 unclassified turkeys. It appears that reproduction was very good during 2007-08.

An additional survey was completed on the Rail X ranch in GMU 35B in the Canelo Hills. A total of 35 turkeys were observed, including 7 adult gobblers, 5 jakes and 23 hens. Additional surveys are planned sometime during the second week of May in the Patagonia Mountain due to an increase in turkey observations there.

In the Chiricahua Mountains surveys resulted in 123 turkeys counted, including 25 mature gobblers, 63 hens, and 35 jakes. Additionally, 2 young hens were observed in the Cave Creek/Portal area. These two are the first surveyed on the east side of the mountains. It appears that we will need to expand survey routes next year to cover the entire Chiricahua Mountains.

Only preliminary surveys were conducted in the Pinaleno Mountains this year and resulted in 15 turkeys counted. Inclement weather probably caused lower numbers in this range for this first survey effort. Complete data should be available by the end of May.

Maricopa County Planning & Development

Region VI met with Maricopa County Planning and Development regarding the update for their Comprehensive Plan. Department personnel provided input on strategies to minimize impacts of development on wildlife. The County was very interested in the Departments upcoming ACP database, and the idea of "Wildlife Friendly Development Certification".

Malpai Habitat Conservation Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is working on compliance documentation for the Malpai Habitat Conservation Plan. The FWS expects a permitting decision this summer.

Multi County Catfish Stocking

Department personnel stocked channel catfish into several lakes in Navajo and Apache counties. Scott Reservoir was stocked to help meet an objective developed during an In-Town lake management evaluation process that involved the public and multiple stakeholders in the area. One of the main objectives for Scott Reservoir was managing for channel catfish. Little Mormon and Little Ortega lakes were also stocked with channel catfish to re-establish fishing opportunities at these locations. These lakes were last stocked in 1995 and had not had sufficient water since then to support stocking. With a higher than average snow pack this winter, Little Mormon Lake filled for the first time since 1994 and Little Ortega Lake caught a significant amount of water.

Multi County Gill Netting Surveys

Spring gill netting surveys were conducted on nearly a dozen regional lakes in Apache, Coconino, and Navajo counties in March and April. Some lakes had moderate carryover of trout, including Becker Lake, Scotts Reservoir and Show Low Lake. Other lakes had surprisingly poor carryover of trout, including Luna Lake and Chevelon Lake, where the fish were large and in good condition, but poor numbers. However, the most notable results were related to illegal introductions of fish species. Concho Lake had carryover of trout through the winter, however, they had not grown to their potential as in past years, likely due to illegally stocked common carp having an impact on benthic invertebrates and consequently on trout growth in the lake. Black Canyon Lake was found to be dominated by illegally stocked largemouth bass and sunfish. Illegally stocked largemouth bass were also documented again for Willow Springs Lake. And illegally introduced northern pike were documented again at Rainbow Lake and Fool Hollow Lake.

Native Fish Project

Department personnel met again with a local rancher in St Johns, Apache County, on March 3 to discuss potential native fish projects on his property. Additional springs and tanks were evaluated for native fish projects. The rancher is enthusiastic about conserving native fish on his property and the Department is considering the use of Landowner Incentive Program funding to help develop the conservation projects.

Northern Arizona University (NAU) – Sinclair Wash Restoration

The region attended a meeting with NAU and Natural Channel Design, a consulting firm, to discuss a potential project to restore riparian habitat along Sinclair Wash where it crosses the NAU campus. The project would act as a gene bank for clones of narrow leaf cottonwood as part of the restoration. This segment of Sinclair Wash is also well suited to use as a watchable wildlife site since the Flagstaff Urban Trail System parallels the wash through this segment.

Pinal County

Pinal County is in the final stages of public scoping for the new Comprehensive Plan. County residents are showing a strong preference for a corridor focused plan which sets aside large amounts of open space for wildlife habitat. Greenprinting, impact fees to purchase open space, and other environmentally-friendly planning strategies are also proving to be highly popular, possibly paving the way for the likes of a wildlife friendly County Plan previously unseen in Arizona.

Rainbow Lake – Northern Pike

Department personnel implemented some recommendations from a University of Arizona project to mechanically control illegally introduced northern pike in Rainbow Lake, Navajo County. A total of 80 daytime net sets and 54 overnight net sets with combinations of gill nets and trap nets were expended in Rainbow Lake from February 20 through March 27 to catch northern pike before their annual spawn. A total of 319 pike were caught and removed from Rainbow Lake. Some of the pike had sunfish and juvenile bass in their gut. During all these surveys, only 1 trout was caught, showing the impact they can have on other sportfish.

Yavapai Ranch Grassland Restoration Project

The Yavapai Ranch contains extensive acreage of Great Basin grassland habitat that has experienced extensive Pinyon Juniper encroachment. In the past few years, Yavapai Ranch has restored 3,000 acres of grassland through Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) funded projects. The current project will expand upon the initial grassland restoration, utilizing hand-crews to remove approximately 1800 acres of Juniper on privately owned sections on the southeast portion of the ranch. A Wildlife Conservation Fund Grant of \$50,000 matched by \$100,000 in LIP funding has made this project possible. The contractor and his crew began work on April 1st, 2008, and are scheduled to complete their task in mid-to-late June.